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LIFE AND ADVENTURES

OF

WILSON BENSON.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

"Multum in parvo."

"The Divine right of Kings is co-existent with the Author of Nature."

TORONTO:

HUNTER, ROSE & CO., PRINTERS, WELLINGTON STREET WEST.

1876.

1876
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The publication of the History of my Life, Travels and Incidents relating thereto will be shortly put in press, and trust it may be found sufficiently interesting to merit a place on the shelves of every family library in the land, and solicit the good wishes of all in the promotion of my venture.

WILSON BENSON.

We the undersigned Ministers of the Gospel beg to recommend the above work to the kind notice of the public.

Rev. J. W. ROBINSON.
Rev. J. A. MCALMON.

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DEDICATED TO

His Excellency Lord Dufferin, K.C.B.,

GOVERNOR GENERAL OF THE DOMINION OF CANADA,

Commander of the Forces, &c.,

IN TOKEN OF HIS EMINENT SERVICES IN THE CAUSE

OF LITERATURE AND ART,

BY

The Author.

PREFACE.

THE author presents this little volume to the public, hoping that the perusal of its pages may afford amusement where it does not otherwise interest; that, in reading the ups and downs of life incident to myself, others may be nerved when beset with apparently insurmountable difficulties; and to the student of nature it may serve to guide him clear of shoals upon which I have ran aground. A review of my past life convinces me of the necessity of a well-matured, well-directed course of action laid down in youth for the guidance of our future lives, combined with an unwavering purpose in execution; it is the only true road to prosperity and social greatness.

In publishing this volume, I have no ambitious end to serve; my humble aim has been to preserve, from oblivion and the ashes of the past, a sketch which might serve future generations in the compilation of a future History of Western Canada (Ontario). When the first portion of this work was written, it was not intended it should ever be printed; but the solicitation of friends, whose

opinions prevailed, induced me to revise what I had written, and add such additional items of interest as might conduce to the information and amusement of the general reader.

Looking upon the history of one's country as an heir-loom, to be preserved at all hazards, has been the chief incentive to my taking up my pen, in my humble way, in that behalf. The fruits of perseverance, the results arising from energy and enterprise in the prosecution of our daily business, is one motive I have endeavoured to inculcate in the substance of the following pages.

BIOGRAPHY.

THE writer was born in the City of Belfast, Ireland, in the month of December, 1821, where my father kept a weaving shop, employing a number of men. When I was about a year old my mother died, and was buried in the family burying-ground in Drumcree Churchyard, near Portadown.

Soon afterwards my father relinquished business, and removed to the Townland of Drumnasue, near Portadown, where he contracted a second marriage with a widow lady who was about being ejected from her small farm for non-payment of arrears of rent. He paid the demand, built a new house on the premises, and made other improvements, and all went smoothly on for a period of ten years, when the sons of my step-mother by her first marriage obtained possession of the premises through neglect of my father not obtaining a transfer of the lease in his own name, and he received a mere nominal sum for his outlay in improvements. Being thus suddenly reduced to penury, I was, in consequence, compelled, at twelve years of age, to hire with a man named Wm. Cullen, receiving a salary of 4s. 6d. sterling for three months' service. I then engaged with a reedmaker named Wm. Hyde, receiving 6s. 6d. per quarter, and remained three years, although my labour was hard and treatment worse.

About this time I returned to my father's, where I received a few months' schooling, being nearly all the day-school I ever attended. At that period the National School system of Ireland had not been fully extended over the country as it now is; hence those whose means were limited found it difficult to obtain an ordinary Common School education, the absence of which in my own case has frequently been a bar to my advancement in life.

At this period a married sister, who had been living in Scotland, paid us a visit, and through her influence I resolved to try my fortune in "the Land o' Cakes," and accompanied her home, with the sum of 12s. 6d. stg. in my pocket. We left my father's residence in the Townland of Mullantine, and journeyed through Belfast and Newtonards to Donaghadee, where we were delayed setting sail till Sunday morning by reason of a storm; but when out a short distance the storm returned with increased violence, and what with the foaming and hissing sound of a tempestuous sea, and the firing of distress guns, the impression made upon my mind on that occasion can never be effaced. Arrived at Portpatrick, on the Scottish coast, in the night, drenched with spray and rain—wet, cold, and hungry—and after a long and diligent search found house-room to sit in till morning, without refreshment, the reader may readily conceive the state of my feelings on this my first trip on the journey of life.

On the following day we left by the way of the Glens of Glenope, Wigtonshire, our destination being Maybole, where my sister's family resided. The country was

mountainous and but sparsely settled, except by numerous bands of gipsies, who were met at short intervals, having huts burrowed out in the sides of the mountain, busily engaged in the manufacture of tinware. Numerous herds of black cattle and sheep browsed in every direction. A distance of some thirty-five miles brought us to Stranraer, and in the vicinity I for the first time in my life saw a veritable snake. Being possessed of the usual accompaniment of a travelling Irishman—a sturdy blackthorn stick—and having heard in my time that the *touch* of Irish blackthorn would instantly kill a snake, I tried the experiment, but found it required *force* added to the touch before the reptile was killed, which proved to be a black adder about three feet in length. The upheaval of the earth in many places caused me to examine the cause, and I ascertained that it was the work of moles—or mudies, as they are termed in the native dialect—which are unknown in Ireland.

Our journey brought us to "the banks of the clear winding Ayr," where we saw Burns' monument, and spent some two hours in the vicinity. The scene was impressive; the landscape was dressed in Nature's loveliest garb—the broom, thistle and whin were all in full bloom—and whether the sense experienced arises from reverence of Nature's noblemen, or that the spot possesses hallowed charms, the visitor is impressed with a desire to linger and dream of the past. A peculiarity I observed in the river Ayr was a curl or ruffle on its surface, even in the most sheltered places, where not a breath of wind disturbed it. We stayed two days in the town of Ayr with a rela-

tive, and for the first time saw "bang-the-beggars," dressed with coats having red collars and cuffs, and whose duty was to arrest mendicants and alms-seekers.

The next town of importance on the route was Falkirk, where may be seen the monuments of Wallace and Knox—the former noted for his doughty deeds of war, and the latter no less remarkable for his tenacity of purpose in the cause of his religion. The place wore an air of antiquity which led me to conclude that modern go-ahead ideas of progress had not penetrated there.

On arriving at Maybole, we found brother-in-law sick and in the hospital, and after a few days' delay we all left the place, *en route* for Glasgow. Our funds being low, we were refused lodgings, and for three successive nights slept at hay-stacks. On the fourth night, being refused admission at a farm-house, we took shelter in the sheep-house. Many of the ewes were suckling their lambs, and whether or not in accordance with the strict law of *meum* and *tuum*, we deprived the lambs of a share of their mothers' milk, which we drank with a relish. Let it not be considered by these remarks that the Scotch are an uncharitable people—for did space permit, numberless acts of benevolence to us might be here recorded; and their extreme caution in entertaining strangers may have arisen from previous travellers "playing sharp," thus rendering their proverbially cautious natures doubly so.

Little worthy of note occurred till we reached Kilmarnock, where I first saw the Kilmarnock night-cap. The country was hilly, yet thrift and prosperity abounded on every side. Dairying is carried on extensively

throughout this district, and the tons weight of cheese to be seen at each farm-house would appear incredible to those who have never seen the manufacture of this article conducted on a large scale.

We reached Glasgow in due time, and my brother-in-law soon found employment at his profession as a weaver, in the Calton suburb. We resided in Brigtown, near Hussey's cotton mill—I believe one of the largest in Scotland at that time. My brother-in-law rented a house from a man named James Smith, from Co. Derry, Ireland. I found occupation in the cotton mill as a piecer, but soon gave that up, and, with eighteen pence in my pocket, made my way to the wholesale house of Mr. John White, a Belfast merchant, doing business below the Salt Market, Glasgow. He trusted me with another eighteen pence worth of miscellaneous goods. In the first week I cleared eight shillings, and continued the business for twenty-one weeks, placing my earnings each week in the hands of a weaver named Robert Young. My route led me to Paisley, Ruglin Brig, Busby, and was prosperous. I attended Glasgow Fair, which lasts six days, and the variety of character congregated there would furnish an excellent field for the observation of the physiognomist, and scope for the efforts of the philanthropist and humanitarian.

About this time my brother-in-law signified his intention of going to the Lothians, and I resolved to accompany him, and called upon my banker Young; but when I asked him for my deposit, he put me off with the remark that he would have it for me on my return.

We started for Edinburgh, our route taking us through

the town of Airdrie, ten miles distant from Glasgow, and to which point the railroad had just been completed. The road was lined with a motley crowd of Irishmen and women, Highlandmen and women, all bent in the direction of the Lothians for the harvest; but as the harvest was not likely to commence for two weeks, and the distance only forty-two miles, they only averaged about five miles per day, using all manner of subterfuges to obtain food. In some cases a man would be raised upon a comrade's shoulder, when he would march into a wealthy farm-house, lay the fellow on the floor, and notify the inmates that the man was dying of hunger, that they were too much exhausted to carry him further, and that he (the farmer) might bury him. This generally had the desired effect—provisions in abundance. On another occasion a cadaverous-looking Celt was deposited with a more than ordinary wealthy gentleman. The fellow assumed to be at the last gasp, and upon the gentleman remonstrating, he was coolly informed that they had done even more than their duty, for it was very probable they had already caught the infection of yellow fever from him. This last was effectual; for they not only received all the provisions and beer they could consume, but a handsome sum of money likewise, to carry the fellow away and bury him. On one occasion an Irishman and a Highlander had a set-to at fisticuffs, and when tired of knuckles, resorted to their reaping-hooks, and by a "turn of the wrist" the Irishman got a slash in upon his opponent, slicing down the greater portion of the left hip. Fights between the two branches of the Celtic family

were of daily occurrence, as they understood each other sufficiently to give vent to their mutual hatred.

Immediately on my arrival in Edinburgh I procured a small stock of fancy articles, which brought me some profit, my route taking me to the summer resort of pleasure-seekers at Portobello, and occasionally to Musselboro'. The picturesque scenery around Portobello, with its elegant cottages, in every imaginable style of architecture, makes it one of the most charming towns I ever visited. On one occasion a dead sea-horse was driven ashore in a storm, the inhabitants eating the flesh. It was about the size of an ordinary three-year-old colt. Cockles are more abundant here than at any other place I ever visited.*

When harvest commenced, I engaged with a gentleman named Hope, about one mile from Portobello, my duty being to assist a boy and girl making porridge for some three hundred hands employed in the harvest, the gentleman cultivating upwards of one thousand acres of land in various kinds of grain, besides stock raising on a large scale. The porridge pot was larger than an ordinary potash kettle, built into an arch, the potstick being moved by horse-power—one person guiding the "stick," while another poured in the meal. The porridge was taken to the field in large tubs, on carts, the average weight being about sixty hundred weight for a breakfast

* Edinburgh is certainly a magnificent place, whether we view it in the architectural grandeur of the New Town, or the stately majesty of the Old Town. High Street is very appropriately named, as the houses in many instances are fourteen stories in height. St. Mary's Wynd is one mile long, and is principally occupied by pawnbrokers. Castle Roe is an imposing edifice, and lends an air of stately magnificence to the city.

meal, each gang of six reapers receiving a quantity equal to about a small wash tub, and a "chappin" of four quarts of butter-milk. Dinner was composed of a two-penny "bap" and three half-pints of ale to each shearer. All hands returned to the house for supper, which was composed of porridge and milk in the same proportions as for breakfast, except that the three hundred shearers were seated on the grass in a circle, the laird and lady, with other visitors, looking on the while in evident glee at the "happy family" scene before them—Irish and Highland working with a will to fill a depleted stomach. The beds were loose straw, spread in two parallel rows the length of the barn, with a small space between, a blanket and quilt being allowed to each three who were companions on the "rig," all being thus huddled together promiscuously, regardless of sex. After remaining three weeks, the harvest being then over, I started on Sunday morning for Glasgow, and after three days' fruitless pleading with banker Young, I embarked on board the steamer *Arab*, for Belfast, where I landed with just one shilling in my pocket, sixpence of which I gave for a ride on the railway cars to Lisburn, making the remainder of my way home on foot, a distance of twenty-three Irish miles. The first acquaintance I came to was my former employer, Wm. Hyc[illegible] he was glad to see me. I again engaged service with him, at former wages, and remained there some six months. I then went to live with a man named James Ford, Townland of Cruebeg, near Pointzpass, in the Co. Armagh, and remained three months. Here we tried the experiment of killing fleas. The peat

stack was near the house, and year after year's accumulation of peat mould had created a bed for the hatching of the little pests. A comrade named Thomas Hall frequently chewed tobacco at night, and I observed that where the juice fell on the floor, numbers of dead fleas might be seen in the morning. This gave an idea to my mind, and we tried the experiment of fumigating the bed clothes and house with vapour of tobacco and brimstone. This effectually rid the house of those pestiferous backbiters.

At the end of six months I returned to my father's, and remained about two months, when I apprenticed myself to a man named William Courtney, Townland of Bottle Hill, Parish of Kilmore, for a period of four years, to learn the linen-weaving business; my remuneration to be a guinea a year and a new shirt. Before the half of my term had expired, my master confessed his inability to teach me anything of the art: however, I remained until within three months of the expiration of my term. Small as was my remuneration, I could not obtain a shilling, and had to appeal to my father for clothing. About this time a *charivari* commenced in Bottle Hill, which at one time caused me some uneasiness. The wedding party were surrounded with an uproarious assemblage, carrying bundles of burning straw and throwing it among the processionists. Finally, three or four policemen appeared on the scene, but they were immediately knocked down and their muskets taken from them. Reinforcements came, and we (I was among the number) were compelled to take safety in flight, running in rear of Lady Richardson's demesne; thence to the Armagh road and home. A few

days afterwards several arrests were made, and I was in constant dread of apprehension. Being engaged in the harvest-field reaping, a comrade raised the false alarm that the police were coming, which so startled me that I cut myself severely on the left hand. During my residence there I laboured very hard, frequently far into the night. I attended a night school at Bottle Hill school-house, which gave me a knowledge of writing. I also attended a Sabbath school for two years, which also contributed to my small stock of learning. I left Mr. Courtney and went back to my father to Mullantine. I commenced weaving on my own account. Shortly afterwards the "Big Wind" came, in the fall of 1838—a hurricane which will be long remembered by every resident of the British Isles at that period. The roof was taken off my father's house, and falling rafters, beams and *debris* smashed every thread in a linen web I had recently put in the loom. I set to work and took up the broken threads, ripped out a piece of the damaged cloth, put it into the reed again, and although it was a 22-hundred fineness, I completed my web; and on presenting my work to Mr. Dunbar, linen draper, Banbridge, for whom I was working, he gave me a premium of half a guinea, as no such task had ever before been undertaken. I took the weaving of several webs from Mr. William Bennett, Potash Mills, near Tandragee. On one occasion he wished several webs of linen woven in a given time, to complete a shipping order he had received, and offered premiums of 10s., 5s. and 2s. 6d. to those who would bring in their webs first in the order named. The webs were all of equal fineness, measuring

fifty-two yards each. I was one of the competitors, and on the fifth day after receiving the yarn I returned the web, being two days in advance of any one. I never slept, in the real sense of the word, during that time, except an occasional "nod" while working at the loom, and a web of the same fineness is considered good work in three weeks.

My father removed from Mullantine to the Townland of Bottle Hill, in the Parish of Kilmore, where I continued my occupation of weaving. At this time I made the acquaintance of a young lady named Miss Jemima Hewitt, who attended the same Sabbath school as myself. She had learned the dressmaking profession in Rich Hill. Our acquaintance soon ripened into a closer relationship than friendship, and we were married privately, our extreme youth—I was eighteen years and she sixteen years of age—rendering us doubtful if our respective parents would give consent to our union on that account. But, on the fact becoming known to them, they one and all heartily acquiesced in our little *ruse*. I remained with my father during that winter, and resolved to try America in the spring.

The customary preparations for an Atlantic voyage were soon made; leave-taking—messages from friends in Ireland to friends in Canada. A voyage across the Atlantic in those days involved many discomforts and privations totally unknown in these days of rapid steam navigation. Seven, eight, nine, and as high as thirteen weeks were not unfrequently occupied by sailing vessels on the voyage; and the consequent suffering experienced on such

occasions, the news of which, when transmitted by the sufferers to relatives at home, had spread an universal dread of a trip to America, and I must confess that I was not without my misgivings; but the incentive to brave the danger was caused by my desire to achieve a home and independence in the Western World which the force of circumstances denied me in the land of my birth.

Myself and wife took passage in the ship *Sarah Stewart*, of Belfast (Captain Lowe), bound for Quebec. We cleared on the 28th March, 1841, and had a pleasant voyage for four days, when a storm arose, and during the next three days we every moment expected to go to the bottom. A sum of five hundred sovereigns was raised amongst the passengers and offered to the captain if he would return to Belfast, but he declared that he dare not do so for any consideration, although we were up to the knees in water on the lower deck. The terrors of that period of three days cannot be described by pen of mine; it must be experienced to be fully appreciated.

When three weeks out, disease made its appearance, and eight children and one man fell victims to its ravages. I had frequently heard of sharks following ships which contained a corpse, and attributed the remark to superstition; but certainly, whether by accident or otherwise, a shark followed us during two days previous to the burial in a watery grave of the man just mentioned, and was seen no more by us. About this time we experienced a dead calm, which continued for three days.

When on the Banks of Newfoundland a dense fog prevailed, which I believe is customary in that part of the

ocean, owing to the meeting of the warm waters of the Gulf Stream with the colder waters of the North Atlantic, and still more rarefied by the numerous icebergs met with in that quarter, eleven of which we saw at one time, requiring great caution in the night to avoid collision. One night during the fog, and while a stiff breeze was blowing, the watch on the bow discovered a large vessel bearing right down upon us, and only a few yards distant. The opposite vessel appeared to have discovered us about the same time, for the bows of the two vessels barely grazed each other, and, with the loss of a piece of bulwark and spar, no further damage was done.

While on the Banks we fell in with a vessel in distress, keeping before the wind by means of a jury-mast, her rigging and masts having been swept away in the same storm which we experienced on the 3rd and 4th of April. She was on a voyage from Mexico to St. Helena when the disaster befel her. They hoisted signals of distress, and our vessel hove-to, when they sent a small boat alongside, and we learned that they were entirely destitute of provisions and water; and out of a crew of nineteen, only five—the captain, second mate, cook, and two seamen—remained. They were plentifully supplied with provisions by the passengers, our captain also supplying them with whatever was necessary to take them on their voyage to Liverpool, whither they signified their intention of proceeding. A rumour had gained currency in British ports that the *Sarah Stewart* was lost, and all hands drowned; but the arrival in Liverpool of the disabled ship mentioned dispelled these illusions, much to the joy of our friends at home.

Captain Lowe was a strict disciplinarian, but his general demeanour both to seamen and passengers was brutal in the extreme; indeed, on some occasions he seemed to be partially insane, for in a frenzy one day he took the ship's carpenter into the hold of the vessel, with auger and axe, to scuttle the ship. The vessel was lost on her return voyage, but the crew were saved, and the captain died of brain fever afterwards.

With the exception of a storm in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, there was not much worthy of note on the trip up the river, the beauties of which have been so frequently described by abler pens than mine. The grandeur of its natural scenery, and picturesque beauty of the many charming villages which stud its banks, and the glittering tin roofs of the houses, in the effulgent rays of an April sun, forms a panorama not readily forgotten. Arrived at quarantine, we passed the same day, on our way to Montreal, where I arrived with two sovereigns in my pocket. From thence we took barges for Kingston, being towed up the river by oxen and horses. On two occasions, in ascending the rapids, the current was dragging the boat and teams out into the river, when the drivers were compelled to cut the hawser with an axe. It occupied ten days between Montreal and Brockville. There was a delay here of an hour before the steamer that was to take us in tow to Kingston, and myself and wife went into the town, but before we got back the boat had left. I followed next day, and found the chest containing my luggage in the boat, but it had been broken open, and the most valuable portion of my own and my wife's clothing, bed clothes, &c., were

stolen. I returned to Brockville next day with my chest, and concluded to reside there. My wife hired out to do general house work. However, times were so bad I could not find a stroke of work to do, neither in the town nor the country round about. My money was exhausted, and the first night in Brockville I took lodging in a tolerably respectable looking tavern; but after getting to bed, the fleas and bed-bugs appeared to be at war which of them should take possession of me. This was my first experience of bed-bugs, and the torture was so great that I arose, dressed myself, and went out into the street. I wandered on to the burying-ground, and laid down under a pine tree, where I slept soundly. Such was my first night's experience in Brockville, which I continued nine nights in succession.

I went out to the "Tin Cap," some miles from Brockville, but not finding employment, and being too proud to beg, I slept at night in the fence corner. I returned to town dispirited and gloomy, as the times were not only bad, but the prospect ahead was far from reassuring. The country was not yet settled into business working since the disturbance of Mackenzie's rebellion, and no part of Canada had felt its effects more severely than in the neighbourhood of Brockville and Prescott. Although the rebellion scarcely deserved the name, in its insignificance, compared with that which was opposed to it, yet it carried with it a significance which was not to be misunderstood. The negotiations for the union of Upper and Lower Canada had prevented the authorities from entering upon

any public works; this, no doubt, tended to increase the general stagnation in business.

Shortly after my return I received employment from a gentleman named Manhardt, living about three miles from Brockville, at weaving a web of full-cloth. Woollen goods were entirely new to me, being differently arranged in the loom, and a hand-shuttle. However, I accomplished my task, producing a fabric which my employer pronounced superior to anything of the kind ever before woven for him. This was the first work I obtained in Canada. I next engaged with a man named Phillips to work on his farm. He asked me if I could plough, which I, in my eagerness to obtain employment, answered in the affirmative, trusting to luck as to how I should succeed; for be it known I never guided a plough in my life, except once in Ireland I held a plough after a rude fashion down one side of a field. The first two or three days I was occupied in general duties, which gave no reason to my employer to complain. The morning arrived, however, when we were to commence the dreaded ordeal of the plough. Whether the old gentleman had doubts of my ability in that branch of duty I know not, but he again asked me if I could hold a plough, when I promptly answered, "Yes, on the barn-floor." He replied by telling me it was in the field he desired the holding done, when I assured him that I had been raised on a farm, and followed it all my life. Arrived at the field, I attempted to start the team down the furrow, when the horses took fright, probably at my bad management, and using the "prrruuushshsh" instead of "whoa" and ran away;

and although they did not get loose from me, they dragged me round and round the field. I managed to prevent them getting over the fence, which they seemed much inclined to do. The proprietor was in the field, and assisted in getting the horses pacified; and just at that moment a tremendous thunder shower providentially came up, which prevented any further attempt at ploughing for the next three or four days. My time was occupied during the remainder of my time here in weeding carrots and other vegetables. Owing to a disagreement, my month's term of agreement came to a termination in about seven days, and with seventy-five cents' remuneration for my services, I started for Brockville. Phillips was blind of an eye, and his good wife had a pair of reel feet, which rendered them a remarkable pair.

Soon after my arrival I engaged with a man named Lusher, a hotel-keeper, of Yankee origin, to act as porter, attend the arrival of the steamers, &c. On one occasion, when on my duties, taking luggage off the steamer bound to Ogdensburg, the boat moved out into the river before I was aware of it, and I was unwillingly taken to that place, and compelled to wait till the next day before another boat came along, bound to Brockville. Lusher's house had been the head-quarters of a volunteer troop of Canadian horse during the rebellion of 1837–38, but owing to information having been learned that he had been in secret communication with the rebels, he was never paid a farthing of the debts incurred. It was a standing joke in Brockville for many years afterwards that "the British sucked in Old Lusher."

I then engaged with a Scotchman named James Nicholson, to learn the baking and confectionery business. At this time I was located so that I saw my wife every day; for to the outside world we passed as brother and sister, without producing the evils which a similar *ruse* on the part of Abram and Sarah of old brought upon the House of Egypt. My time here was spent very pleasantly, and I soon acquired a good practical knowledge of the art of making my own bread, by making bread for others. The thought of returning to Ireland, however, I had never abandoned, and my only desire was to acquire a trade which would serve me better there than weaving. Experience taught me that a journeyman baker was not that profession, and after a stay of six months I abandoned the business.

I next engaged with a Dublin man, named O'Brien, to learn shoemaking; but a two days' apprenticeship convinced me that "lasts" and "pegs" and "wax ends" would not last me in pegging out an existence to the end of my days.

In 1842 I engaged with Mr. Geo. Chaffey, of Brockville, who carried on an extensive agricultural implement manufactory, employing a great number of hands, and he was, without exception, one of the most gentlemanly employers I met, either before or since. The times were dull, and his manufactory suffered in consequence, and in the fall of the year he commenced discharging his employees. He called me into his office one day, and informed me of his determination to reduce his expenses, but that if I was unemployed in the spring he would then give me employ-

ment. I asked him why he discharged *me*, "for," said I, "it takes very little work to keep me going." He burst into a hearty laugh, and gave me employment till spring. I would here mention, that from the time I engaged with Mr. Chaffey, my wife and I had kept house on our own account. My wages were $14 per month and board myself, and my wife found constant employment at her profession of dressmaking; so that we lived comfortably and saved money.

In the spring of 1843 Mr. Chaffey paid me in full, and said that as he was going to Toronto, I had better accompany him, as I intended going West; but while on our passage on the steamer *Brockville*, I engaged as cook on board the vessel, at $10 per month. Having no immediate use for the money I had in my possession, amounting to $60 or $70, I returned it to Mr. Chaffey for safe keeping, without any other security than his word of honour.

Our route was principally between Kingston and Dickenson's Landing, and the varied scenery on that part of the Thousand Islands was delightful in the extreme. The commander, Capt. Maxwell, was an excellent officer, of genial manner, and this rendered my position more pleasant. My knowledge of paste and pastry, learned in Brockville, came in good stead in my new capacity of cook, and I had here ample opportunity of developing any latent power I might possess in the culinary art. I taxed my energies in the performance of my duty to the utmost, and believe I was rewarded with that degree of success which always attends well-applied, persistent effort.

The fall was now approaching, and as the steamer was about to "lay up" for the winter at Kingston, and as I had the promise of a continuance of my services upon her next season, I resolved to move my wife to that city. Accordingly, on the last trip down the river, I got off at Brockville, packed up my household goods, and not only received my money from Mr. Chaffey, but percentage for every day he held it in his possession. This was an act of generosity I could scarcely have expected.

Arrived at Kingston, I rented a house on lot 24, Stewartsville, Kingston, where I opened a small store, stocked it with groceries and other miscellaneous articles suited to the trade of the locality, and was tolerably successful. My experience during the winter of 1843-44 was uneventful, and presented nothing beyond the usual routine of life, except that on the 21st of November a great snow storm came on, and as I was returning from town with a tin stove on my back, on crossing the commons, I fell into the vats of an old tannery which had never been filled up, except by snow, and was nearly smothered before I could extricate myself.

In the spring of 1844 I recommenced my duties on the steamer *Brockville*. The only route of travel between the West and Montreal was by the St. Lawrence steamers and it furnished me frequent opportunities of becoming acquainted with the persons of many of the leading men of that day, many of whom have passed to their long home. Politics were at that time carried on in the most violent partizan spirit, the zeal of the different advocates leading them to such an excess of ardour that the merits

or demerits of their respective causes were lost sight of in personal praise or abuse of the party leaders they severally worshipped. These occasional episodes in my steamboat life not only amused me, but furnished food for reflection, and awakened in me a new and lively interest in the country, and begat a feeling of identity in its welfare which supplanted the yearning desire I had hitherto entertained of returning to my native land.

The Cornwall and Beauharnois Canals were under course of construction at this period. A riot occurred on the latter work between the Cork and Connaught Irishmen. The former, being the most numerous, obtained the mastery. News of this reached the Cornwall works; the Connaught men here, who were most numerous, determined to avenge the cause of their party, and drove the handles out of their picks, and with other bludgeons fell upon the Cork men with an energy which would have done credit to a better cause. The steamer was lying at the wharf at Dickenson's Landing at the time, and some of the fugitives took refuge on the boat. The assailants attempted to follow, when a fierce hand-to-hand conflict took place, the boat's crew taking part to prevent their (the assailants') entry. Two men had their brains beaten out in sight of the boat, the wives and children of the murdered men rending the air with their piercing shrieks while the bloody butchery was being enacted. The repeated onslaughts upon the boat compelled us to move out into the stream; and for a length of time afterwards a body of volunteers was compelled to keep guard to prevent the infuriated mob from carrying into execution

the threat that they would burn or sink the *Brockville*, on such nights as we lay there. Peace was only restored by the withdrawal of the Cork men from the works. The same spirit was manifested on the Brantford Canal, which was in course of construction at that time, but with less disastrous results. My countrymen earned for themselves an unenviable notoriety, and produced an impression, especially among the rural population of Canada at that time, that the Irish, one and all, were "hard cases."

During the winter of 1844–45, Captain Maxwell purchased a large quantity of oysters and fresh haddock, which he employed me to peddle through the neighbourhood of Kingston. On one occasion, while passing through the Indian woods between Napanee and Belleville, I found the mail-bag belonging to the main route between Montreal and Toronto. It was shortly after nightfall, and the bag was so heavy that it was with much difficulty I lifted it into my waggon, taking it to Belleville, and delivered it to the Stage Agent there. Shortly afterwards, Captain Twohy, of the mail line, gave me ten dollars as a reward for my honesty. The contents of the bag were valuable, as it contained the money for the quarterly pay of the several garrisons of troops then in the West.

In 1845 I continued sailing in my former capacity, but my eyes, which had shown threatening symptoms the previous season, now became so much inflamed that I was compelled to abandon the business, and in a short time had to be led by the hand through the streets. I had the services of Drs. Samson and Robertson and others, but

experienced no benefit. One day a gentleman accosted me respecting my ailment. His name was Dr. Dickson, a young surgeon recently from Londonderry, Ireland. Ascertaining from me that I had been acquainted with his uncle in Portadown, also an eminent surgeon, he invited me to accompany him to his surgery, where he operated upon my eyes, and in three weeks they were entirely well, and have remained so ever since.

In 1846 I shipped on the *Britannia*, Captain Maxwell, formerly of the *Brockville*, running from Kingston down the St. Lawrence to Montreal, around by the Lake of Two Mountains, and the Ottawa River to Bytown (now Ottawa), thence by the Rideau Canal to Kingston. During the season we had numbers of emigrants from the Old Country, many of whom were in a destitute condition and dying of fever. On several trips we have had two and three deaths between Montreal and Kingston. On one occasion, as we were entering the first lock on the Rideau Canal at Bytown, a little Irish girl, about eleven years of age, had just received a quantity of tea from me which she was carrying in a vessel, when the boat gave a lurch as the girl reached the deck, and she fell overboard and was drowned. After considerable delay the body was recovered, and Captain Maxwell, to his credit be it said, would not allow the boat to proceed on her voyage until the afternoon of the following day, when the child was buried.

During this year I was on other boats. While on the *Grenville*, Captain Smith, who kept a tavern at Kingston, because I would not play cards and spend my money

as did the other hands on the boat, I was discharged. I then shipped on the *Traveller*, owned by Hooker & Henderson, Captain Taylor, running principally on Lake Ontario. Times being bad, and traffic scarce, the owners determined to lay the boat up, and consequently she was placed on the "ways" for repairs. I was employed as watchman on her for two months, which ended my boating for that season. I then bought a horse and waggon, and went to peddling through the country around Kingston.

I had a brother-in-law living in the Township of Richmond, some thirty-five miles from Kingston, and owing to his representations I removed there, purchased an acre of land, and erected a snug house, although in the beginning of winter, and opened a general grocery, which my wife attended, while I travelled through the country with a miscellaneous stock of wares. Money was out of the question, and trade in the shape of black maple sugar, hogs' lard, plucked poultry and bad butter—the former and latter realizing less in Kingston market than I paid for it. One circumstance in this connection I wish specially to mention:—I attended Kingston market twice a week, and travelled all night on such occasions to be on hand early in the morning. The beast I drove was a noble animal, named Sally, and when her name was mentioned shot ahead like an arrow. On one of my journeys to Kingston, having a female friend in company, one toll-gate on the way was half open, and I at once conceived the mischievous idea of "running the gate." Accordingly, when within thirty or forty yards I shouted to the

mare, and we flew past just as the toll-keeper hailed us to stop. I replied that the mare was running away, and I could not hold her; but when some thirty rods past the gate, my companion's bonnet flew off, and I drew up and went back to recover it, when the toll-keeper in drawers and stocking-feet came up at the top of his speed, and I had barely time on returning to the sleigh to jump in and shout to the mare, leaving the poor toll-keeper just as he was about to place his hand on the sleigh.

In the spring of the year the sheriff made a seizure upon the property of the man from whom I had purchased my acre of land, and as I had not obtained a deed, it was included in the sale. I had expended a considerable sum in the erection of the house, and as I ascertained there was no redress, I accepted an offer of a cow valued at seventeen dollars for my improvements. This was a stunning blow to the future prospects I had pictured to myself; but

"What is the use of repining?"

So I set to work and made my calculations that as I already possessed one cow, I would purchase another, and that with the milk of those and my own earnings, we might do better in Kingston. One debtor in the neighbourhood owed me a load of straw and two sheep; these I sold for three dollars, and with my little effects I retraced my steps to Kingston.

Arrived in Kingston, I again rented a house in Stewartsville from Mr. Edward Noble, and opened a store in connection with my small dairy and was doing tolerably well. Soon after a neighbour's cow broke into my stable,

and gored one of my cows, so that she died in three weeks afterwards. I sold the other cow for $10, and thus again was my stock in trade reduced to a low ebb. I began to realize the truth of the proverb that "three removes are as bad as a fire"—equal to a total loss. I had been industriously engaged for five years climbing the ladder of fortune, and here I was at the lowermost rung.

On the opening of navigation (1847), I shipped on the boat *St. Thomas*, as cook, the route being around Lake Ontario. The boat was leaky—so much so that myself and the engineer left her at Port Dalhousie. The captain would pay us nothing, as our month was not up. I went back to Kingston, and worked around town for a time, and finally removed to Toronto, where I opened a small store of miscellaneous goods on Victoria Street. The difference in price of vegetables and fruit in Toronto compared with Kingston caused me to open up a trade between the two places. I stood the Kingston market while my wife purchased in Toronto, and forwarded to me by boat. The rot had become so bad that a cask of potatoes shipped at Toronto on Saturday in apparently sound condition, were totally rotten when opened in Kingston on Monday following; but on the whole I had no reason to complain of success.

In 1848 I engaged on the steamer *William the Fourth*, belonging to Cook & Calvin—Captain Day, of Ogdensburg. Our first trip was to the "Head of the Trent," to Prescott. Our next trip was to Port Dalhousie, to tow a large raft of twenty-one drams belonging to Mr. Marsh, of Port Hope. The boat was also laden with fifty cords

of wood. When between Port Hope and Oswego a storm sprang up, and what with the tremendous load and the increased power given the engines to keep the raft up in the storm, she "broke her back," to use a nautical phrase. The planks started from their places, and the water spouted in through the opening with a hissing sound, striking the upper deck. We were thirty miles from the nearest land, and it was only a question of time how long the vessel would float. All hands were called into consultation, when Mr. Marsh at once proposed to abandon the raft and save the men; but how to reach the Frenchmen on the raft was a question more easily proposed than solved. However, Mr. Miller, of Prescott, first mate, was equal to the emergency. He asked me if I had any hams in the pantry, and I replied I had large Chicago hams, when he ordered me to peel off the rind and bring them to him. A number of quilts and blankets were procured, and after much labour these were crushed into the opening with handspikes, and coal tar sprinkled thereon; then the rind of the hams was securely nailed over that, and more coal tar applied, which effectually stopped the leak, and the vessel carried us safely to our destination at Garden Island. Without waiting for repairs we proceeded to Prescott. One man aboard was ill of fever and ague, and I gave him a bottle of my ague cure, which cured him in less than two days. I might here mention that I had been subject to attacks of ague during the first three years of my boating life, and, singular to relate, the means of cure were revealed to me in a dream. The man to whom I have just referred was mate of the vessel, and he was so

weak that he fell down while at his post at the wheel. I gave him the usual dose of a wine-glassful of the mixture, when he fell down apparently as if dead. I had the presence of mind to administer a few spoonsful of melted butter, which caused vomiting, otherwise it is questionable if he would have recovered. The dose was too strong for his debilitated constitution.

On the return trip to Kingston, a man and his wife were passengers. The captain forcibly landed the man at Firman's Wharf, and took the woman on. The man took the land route, and the following day arrived in Kingston, when he had Capt. Day, the first mate, and engineer arrested. The captain was fined a trifling sum, and thus the matter ended. We left Kingston to take another raft in tow without making any repairs, and the only precaution taken to secure our lives in case of similar peril to that which threatened us on our previous voyage, was the acquisition of an open scow, and, not thinking this safe, I left, and engaged on the steamer *Transit*, Capt. Richardson, running from Toronto to Niagara and Queenston. I continued on this boat during the remainder of the summer. My wife continued keeping store on Victoria Street, Toronto, and our several earnings placed us in comfortable circumstances for the coming winter. A part of this summer I spent in travelling through the Niagara district and the West, selling my ague cure, and circulating advertisements. I cured hundreds of cases in the peninsula, and many in Toronto can testify to its efficacy.

In 1849 I shipped on the schooner *Rose of Milton*,

Capt. Hamilton, cruising on Lakes Ontario and Erie. On one trip to the town of Erie, Pennsylvania, for a cargo of coal, while lying at the dock, a diminutive negro man, with a white beard, came on board the vessel, and inquired of me if this was a British vessel. On being informed that it was, he desired to be secreted, stating that he was a runaway slave, and that his pursuers were on his track. I at once secreted him in a closet which served as a store-room for vegetables, &c., and as we were almost ready to set sail, I did not discover his presence to either captain or crew until we were some distance out on the lake. When he appeared, Capt. Hamilton inquired of me where I had obtained "that child," and on being informed, expressed some anxiety, as we were liable to be captured had we been followed by a steamer. As it was, he merely looked up at the rigging, and exclaimed, "Blow, breezes, blow!" The negro, who knew no other name than "Sambo," we brought to Toronto. On one occasion, when I offered him some molasses, he shook his head and made grimaces expressive of disgust. He informed me that the slaves employed on the sugar plantations, when beaten by their masters, in order to obtain an indirect revenge, spat in the syrup, and committed other filthy things as an imaginary punishment upon the whites. I frequently saw Sambo in Toronto, and many times he expressed thankfulness to me for his deliverance. I may here mention that shortly after the arrival of Sambo on board the *Rose of Milton* at Erie, two suspicious-looking men, dressed in plain clothes, came aboard and paced up and down the deck several times, and as all

the crew were absent at the time, I felt some apprehension for the safety of the poor fugitive; but seeing nothing of a suspicious appearance, and the almost entire absence of the crew, they sauntered away. I made several other trips up and down the lakes during that summer on the same vessel.

In the fall of that year we loaded with flour at Gamble's Mills, on the Humber, for a last trip, bound to Kingston, where we loaded with salt as a return cargo. When off "The Ducks" on our return trip, we were overtaken by a storm, and with much difficulty succeeded in running into Presqu'Isle, where we were compelled to remain three days, on each of which we attempted to put to sea, and were as frequently compelled to return. This was on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of December. The intense cold froze the spray, which constantly lashed over the vessel, as soon as it fell. The deck I liberally strewed with salt, which kept the water from freezing. The ropes and sails were unmanageable. On the fourth day, the wind having somewhat abated, we put to sea, and succeeded in reaching Port Hope the same day. Next morning we set sail, and in twenty-four hours afterwards we anchored in Toronto Bay. As soon as we landed, I resolved to abandon sailing, and have religiously kept my resolution ever since. During the summer I took my eldest son on an excursion trip to Kingston, and when near Toronto, on our return, I observed a fire in the city, and the impression instantly forced itself upon my mind that it was my house on Victoria Street; and to my consternation, upon my arrival the premonition proved too true, for I found my goods

and household furniture on the street, much of which was lost beyond recovery, and a barrel of beer, which had been rolled out, by some means got the tap turned, and the contents ran away in a stream down the gutter of the street.

Immediately after quitting the schooner, a brother-in-law of mine, who lived in the immediate vicinity of Orangeville, came to see me, and from his representations of the benefits of farming, I sent my wife up with him to ascertain from her how she liked the place. I sent a barrel of whiskey with him to sell for me. Soon after this I received a letter informing me of the death of my father, in Ireland, which hastened my departure from Toronto to Orangeville. On my arrival I at once located on a Clergy Reserve lot of land, on the first concession of the township of Amaranth, near Orangeville. As there was considerable demand for whiskey, I concluded to try another barrel, and accordingly took a yoke of oxen and went to Erin Village and purchased a fifty-two gallon barrel. The roads were bad, the snow being almost gone, nothing remaining but a bed of ice; and before I could descend the hills in Caledon I was compelled to cut places in the ice, where the oxen might get a foothold. No one but those who have had a similar experience can realize the difficulties of that trip. On my arrival at Orangeville —then a hamlet of three houses, but at the time of writing (1876) one of the most flourishing inland towns in Ontario, the junction of the two branches of the Toronto, Grey and Bruce Railroad, and containing a population of over three thousand inhabitants—I sold fully one-half my

barrel of whiskey, and the remainder I soon after disposed of, a part of which has not yet been paid for. The first chopping I had attempted was on my new farm, and while underbrushing cut my foot severely, which laid me up for six weeks. Snow at that time fell to an average depth of about four feet in the bush; hence the toil, fatigue, and discomforts of chopping under such circumstances are incomprehensible to the uninitiated.

At this time I contracted no store debts, and thus avoided many of the troubles which harassed my neighbours. I went to the older settlements during haying and harvest, and with my earnings purchased such necessaries as were absolutely required; and when a want occurred where the means were not available to meet it, I practised self-denial. Although I make no pretension to a greater share of worldly wisdom than the majority of my fellow-men, yet I believe few will dispute my assertion when I state that nine-tenths of the financial ills that have beset the first settlers throughout Canada may be traced to the facility with which they could become involved in debt, which hung like a millstone around their necks for a number of years, until, finally, either their energies became wasted so that they were no longer able to stem the current of compound interest, or their creditors sent in the sheriff to close the scene—the actors in the "Comedy of Errors" removing to another new section of country to conclude the farce of "Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water." I had succeeded in clearing sufficient ground in the spring to sow a considerable area of wheat, besides a share of planted crop. The season was

unpropitious, and my wheat was frozen so badly that I did not realize from my crop the quantity of seed I had sown.

The second year my grain was remarkably good, which awakened within me an inconceivable impulse in the performance of my arduous duties. With the first sleighing, myself and a neighbour, Mr. Christopher Irwin, each started with a small "grist" (the usual term applied to a quantity of grain milled for family use), and went to McLaughlin's mill, Mono Village. The night was stormy, and we remained till the morning. When about ready to start, I went to the only hotel in the village for a bottle of whiskey to treat the miller, Michael McLaughlin, Mr. Dodds, also an acquaintance, Mr. Irwin and myself. My bags, containing the proceeds of eight bushels of wheat, were standing not far from the door of the mill; but to my surprise, on returning, the grist was gone, "bag and baggage." One thing I was assured of, neither Mr. Irwin nor Mr. Dodds took it; and the only supposititious idea I entertain on the subject is, that the relative fairies of the McLaughlins had followed them from Ireland—for I often there heard they were great meal thieves—and spirited away my flour, shorts, bran, bags and all. Whether it was a knowledge of this fact that pricked the conscience of the honest miller, Mick McLaughlin, he reimbursed me with a generous donation of *ninety* pounds of very black flour. My expectations of the manner in which they "did things in the country" were considerably damped by this specimen of legerdemain, and caused me to sigh for the happy days I spent on my loom in

Ireland, with its witches, warlocks, fairies and all. The disappointment of my wife found expression in the remark that I had scarcely got the "toll," and lost the "grist."

The following year my grain crop was excellent, and I had no reason to complain of Amaranth; but the Toronto line through the County of Grey being then recently surveyed, and the reports of the new settlers representing it as a second Garden of Eden, I with many others came to see it. The prospect was lovely; where the surface was not covered with ground-hemlock, there was an abundance of wild nettles, cow-cabbage, wild onions (leeks), &c., which certainly gave the virgin forest a luxuriant appearance. The black flies and mosquitoes assailed one in myriads, coming through the Township of Melancthon especially; but even these torments seem frivolous when you "get used to it." There were three of us in company when we started to select a farm apiece. The three of us had made up our minds as to possessing *two* lots, and the difficulty arose how to decide. I agreed to "cast lots," but one of my companions refused to accede to that proposal; hence my other companion and myself became the possessors of the coveted lands—not that they turned out to be superior to thousands of acres in the same Township of Artemesia. The conditions of purchase were either immediate settlement, or "to be and appear once in each month on the said premises," with a view to making improvements thereon. This regulation led me to to make some twelve or thirteen trips through the Melancthon swamps before I finally settled down, at which time

I had a small clearing and a considerable quantity of potatoes and turnips raised. At this time it was impossible to work in small clearings without a veil to keep the flies away; and after four o'clock in the afternoon a "smudge" or slow fire had to be kindled to raise smoke to drive them away.

Late in the fall of this year, while still residing in Amaranth, I one night dreamed that a black man was seizing me, as if by authority, and in my fright woke up. At that instant I heard the squeal of a pig, six of which I had in an enclosure close to the dwelling. Jumping out of bed I seized a long-handled spade and rushed out, when there was a huge bear, with a pig in his arms, making his way out of the pig-sty. I struck him a blow with the spade, which broke the handle, causing Bruin to let go his hold of the pig, and I hastily entered the house, and through the window had the satisfaction of seeing the bear march slowly away without his prey. There were six large pigs in the "pen," and in the morning not one of them was to be seen; but a few days afterwards I found five of them some three miles distant, and on the eleventh day the one which had been in the tender embrace of the bear came back, dragging its hind-quarters on the ground, and a large "flake" of flesh, as large as my two outstretched hands, torn off the shoulder. With a patch of cloth torn off an old pair of canvas pants which I had worn in my sailor days, and a plentiful coating of melted pitch, I bound up the wound, and the pig (which was a female) I afterwards sold to Mr. John Mackay, of this township (Artemesia), who raised several litters of young from her.

I soon after this sold my place in Amaranth to Mr. John Armstrong, of the east of Munro, for forty dollars, an amount which at this day would seem inconsiderably small.

On the 14th February, 1851, I hired a team, bade adieu to Amaranth, and started for Artemesia. The snow was very deep, and we were two days travelling forty-four miles. From the Toronto line back to the next concession to my lot, there had been no traffic whatever, and the snow was on an average four feet deep; but with this difference from the snows of the present day, there were no drifts, owing to the universal shelter of the forest on every side.

I had brought with me a year's provisions, which lasted me till the growth of my own crop the following summer. I also brought a yoke of steers, two cows, a heifer, and some pigs. Fodder was almost out of the question, and I barely succeeded in purchasing two hundred pounds of straw, giving each animal a small handful night and morning, the rest of their subtenance depending entirely on browse; and although there were over two months of winter remaining, the cattle were in excellent condition in the spring. Of the two hundred pounds of straw, I had enough left in spring to fill a straw bed-tick for a neighbour. My first crop was excellent, and altogether the prospect in my new home was cheering.

I might here mention that in the early part of the winter I removed from Amaranth. I had been living alone in Artemesia, some nights remaining in my shanty, and at other times coming out to Mr. John May's. On one

occasion while asleep in my shanty, I was awakened by some noise, and what was my surprise to see a large animal standing by the bedside, which I took to be a grey wolf. My terror was inexpressible. Perceiving that it made no demonstration such as might be expected from a ravenous wolf, upon closer examination I discerned that my self-invited guest was a large spotted dog. I was the only settler on the back line east of the Toronto and Sydenham road, and as there were no tracks of the dog having come from the front, the only conclusion I could satisfactorily arrive at was, that the dog belonged to some hunter, and that, while in pursuit of game, he had got out of reach of his master, and mine being the nearest habitation to the settlements on the north, his dogship paid me the visit in question. He stayed with me all day, and in the evening came with me to the front road, when he looked up in my face with an intelligent expression, and quietly trotted away in the direction of Owen Sound. At this time wolves were numerous, and in the summer bears were frequently met with.

Cattle-hunting, as the term goes, afforded many illustrations of "roughing it in the bush." Cattle would stray two, three and four miles back into the bush; and although that distance seems but trifling in the imagination, or through a cleared country, the reality of that distance in a dense forest of nightland, interspersed with swamps, marshes, beaver-meadows and jungles, is a different matter. In case the cattle were lying, the bells they carried would not be heard at times more than three or four hundred yards. Until a person became acquainted

with the different swamps, beaver-meadows, &c., which served as landmarks, the most expert bushmen were sometimes at a loss to determine their position after running hither and thither for a few hours, especially if the day were cloudy. However, there was no difficulty in getting home if the cattle were found, for they could steer a straight line for home from any point they might be. Frequently, on my travels through the bush, when doubtful of my locality, I broke down small twigs and branches of trees, so that I might be able to retrace my steps; but frequently following these practices in the same locality rather tended to distract than to guide.

During the first year many persons were obliged to carry flour on their backs from the Township of St. Vincent, a distance of from fifteen to twenty-five miles. Every necessary of life was procurable only at an enormous sacrifice of toil and privation. The first flour I milled was made at a mill near Orangeville, a distance of forty-six miles. To the young man of to-day, that distance would seem a very long way, even with good roads and horse teams; but when bad roads, deep snows, and ox teams are taken into consideration, the magnitude of the task may be to some extent comprehended.

The second year brought about nothing worthy of special notice. Frost was unknown, except on very low lands. Late in the fall of the year, myself and Messrs. Peter Rowe, Wm. Bowler, Edward Fagan and Joseph Price, each started with our oxen and sleds and a small grist of wheat, for Walter's Falls mills, a distance of some eleven miles. There was no snow when going, but early

on the following morning there was a depth of six or eight inches, and snow falling rapidly. Three of us took the route by seventy sideroad, thinking by that means to have a greater share of better road on the Toronto line ; the other two teams came by the Euphrasia and Holland town line. Before we reached the Toronto line the snow was between four and five feet deep, and towards evening the cold became intense. Our oxen were exhausted, and if one team remained ten minutes behind another, the track was filled up, the snow was falling so fast. What with breaking the road ahead of the oxen and the exertion required to wade through the deep snow, I was in a perspiration when we reached the Toronto line, where the road was much better. The slow pace of the oxen prevented me taking sufficient exercise to keep up warmth, and I became chilled, then benumbed, and finally, when I reached the foot of the hill on which Mr. John Allan's hotel stands, I was unable to walk, and crawled on my hands and knees most of the way up the hill. I was taken into Mr. Allan's and kindly cared for. My boots were frozen to my feet, so that they had to be thawed before they could be drawn off, and my right foot found badly frozen. I was compelled to remain two days before I was able to set out for home. My companions were nearly in as bad plight as myself.

The two who came by the town line had as much difficulty as ourselves. Mr. Bowler, being hindmost, had a narrow escape; his oxen "gave out" and lay down, and he lay down, stretched between the two oxen, and thinks he may have lain about an hour, although he was only

semi-conscious at the time, as he was so exhausted that he expected to die there. In a short time, however, the oxen arose, and aroused him, and they being refreshed, brought him home with little difficulty.

During the same day my wife went to the store of Mr. R. Lever, and when returning, worn out with cold and fatigue, called into the house of Mr. Alexander Madill, who loaned her a pair of drawers, which enabled her to reach home in safety.

I make this slight digression to illustrate the difficulties and dangers the first settlers encountered. My own experience in this respect is that of hundreds of others; and that many did not succumb in death when exposed to the rigours of winter, imperfectly clothed and scantily fed, seems almost miraculous.

In summer many families eked out an existence in a very precarious manner. In the early part of the summer, wild leeks and cow-cabbage, wild nettles, &c., were a valuable substitute for a more substantial meal. As soon as potatoes were the size of musket bullets they were carefully extracted from the root without injuring the stalk.

During the first years of my residence in Artemesia, myself and many of my neighbours went to the older settlements in haying and harvest, returning before our own crop was ripe. A portion of our earnings had to be carefully hoarded to meet the taxes, for it was next to impossible to obtain a cash market for farm produce nearer than Owen Sound.

I have also been to Owen Sound with a grist, and been

compelled to remain there three days and nights, sleeping in the mill at night, neither eating a warm meal from leaving home until my return, for the very good reason that I had no money. On one occasion I took a large load of wheat to Owen Sound market, which I sold to Mr. A. Neelands at the rate of 2s. 1d. (42 cents) per bushel. I purchased a Family Bible and a shawl for my wife, which left me five dollars in debt besides the proceeds of my load of wheat. In the following year (1854–55) produce was somewhat enhanced in value owing to the Crimean war and the construction of the Grand Trunk Railway; still we were far in the back-ground, owing to the long distance from market—Owen Sound being the principal market of this county. Owing to the almost impassable state of the roads in the fall of the year, it was out of the question to forward grain in time for shipment before the close of navigation, and consequently where the grain had to be held over till spring, merchants could not give nearly as good prices as though they could forward it immediately to head-quarters. At the time of writing things have changed—a market at our own door—the sound of railway and steam whistles, of mills and manufactories, where a few short years ago resounded the howl of the wolf. Innumerable villages, containing mills, manufactories and general stores of merchandize now mark the spot which was overgrown by dense forest trees fifteen or twenty years ago. The stride of prosperity made by the County of Grey, and indeed the country at large, has been gigantic; and it is a source of extreme gratification to me, as it no doubt will be to

all the pioneers of my early days, that their sacrifice of worldly comforts and exposure to toil and suffering have so largely contributed to the development of our country and the welfare of succeeding generations.

The tendency of frost during the later years of settlement in this country is somewhat singular, as it is the general opinion that as a country becomes cleared, the frost decreases; but the history of this section of country proves the reverse. In the latter part of July, 1860, this section of country, as well as North America generally, was visited by a severe frost, which left many families destitute of bread for the succeeding winter. Some of my own wheat was so far advanced toward maturity that it escaped harm, but some spring wheat was totally destroyed. In the beginning of August this year my wife died, and nine days afterwards my youngest child, three years of age, also died—in both cases after a short illness. These sudden bereavements preyed heavily upon my mind, rendering me gloomy and spiritless in the prosecution of my labours; and as a consequence my affairs did not prosper. In about a year afterwards I again married, and have reason to look back with thankfulness upon the step I then took.

In June, 1864, this country was visited by a severe frost, which stunted meadow-grass and grain crops, the succeeding month being unusually dry, so that mowing hay or cradling grain was next to impossible, owing to the shortness of the crop. During this summer occurred the longest period of dry weather without rainfall within my recollection in Canada—the only period coming near to it being the summer of 1843.

One morning, in the commencement of my early settlement here, I went to search for my cattle, and had just caught sound of the bell, when three deer came galloping toward me. Those who have never seen wild deer in full flight through the forest, can form no conception of their majestic appearance and graceful motion, undulating beneath overhanging branches, or bounding over fallen timber six and even eight feet in height. I was intently gazing after their retreating forms, when my attention was attracted by a rustling sound behind me, and on turning round beheld a large grey wolf a few yards distant. He, too, was standing looking at me. He was soon joined by another, and in a few moments by two more. I concluded that "my hour had come." As domesticated dumb animals are said to seek protection from human beings in cases of danger, I reversed the rule, and ran toward my cattle, shouting at the top of my voice. The wolves followed on the track of the deer, probably as much astonished at my presence as I was frightened at theirs.

In the summer of 1863 occurred the election of George Jackson and George Snider. On the day previous to the "Declaration," five others besides myself started in a one-horse waggon to attend the demonstration. The horse was high-tempered, and at times difficult to manage. When going down the hill below the Orange Hall in Holland, on the Toronto and Sydenham Road, the horse began to plunge forward violently, and commenced to run away, all my efforts to restrain him being of no avail. Three of the company besides myself threw ourselves out of the waggon; the two others, Thos. Kells and Thos. Lackey,

were thrown out. Mr. Kells escaped with a few scratches, but poor Lackey fell with his head upon a stone. He was insensible when taken up; but after we conveyed him to the house of Mr. John Martin, he became somewhat conscious. Dr. McGregor, of Johnstown, was sent for, but he was engaged in the election affairs, and it was the evening of the following day when Dr. Mahaffy arrived. He pronounced the skull broken, but that he was past cure, and the poor fellow breathed his last on the following day. His genial manners endeared him to a large circle of friends, and his untimely death cast an overshadowing gloom over the community.

This summer I had a narrow escape from being killed by a vicious bull I possessed. On several occasions he exhibited symptoms of a desire to attack me when I entered the enclosure of about a quarter of an acre in which he was kept. I determined to overawe him, and for that purpose entered the enclosure with a pitchfork in my hand; and when he commenced brandishing his horns and pawing the earth with his feet, I gave him a slight probe with the prongs, when the brute charged, caught me upon his horns and tossed me into the air to a great height. I fell in a slight depression in the ground, which partially saved me from further attack, until the arrival of my son with the dog, which distracted the animal's attention until I had time to get over the fence out of his reach. My injuries were not severe, although I felt the effects of my "elevation" for some weeks afterwards.

In the year 1870 I met with another severe accident. A friend named James Brady came to visit me. I had

put his horses in the stable, and when on the loft putting down some hay to them, I fell through the opening, alighting on the edge of the plank forming the manger, breaking two of my ribs, and otherwise bruising myself internally, the effects of which I feel to this day.

Time passed along with its usual ups and downs until December, when the agitation arose for the construction of the Toronto, Grey and Bruce Railroad from Orangeville to Owen Sound. The project was successful, and its construction has developed our County more during the two and a half years since it has been constructed than it progressed for fifteen years previously.

I might have devoted a portion of this work to writing a "Chapter of Accidents," as I have had a large share of these comforts. On the 23rd December, 1873, I went to assist my neighbour William Bowler in threshing. The day was stormy, with a head wind; and although most of the men as well as myself desired to leave off till the following day, yet Mrs. B. put in a veto and the work continued. I was placed at the rear of the machine, and when we came to clean up the floor—the accumulated dust, thistle-downs, and other accumulations of dust and dirt—the dust blinded me so that when I went out of the barn, not being able to see the danger, I stepped close to the "knuckle" of the tumbling-shaft, which caught my pants, and drew my leg and body around with it in its course. I had sufficient presence of mind to throw myself at full length upon the shaft, grasping it with my arms, otherwise I must inevitably have been crushed to death. As it was, my body was whirled round and round, the space

between the shaft and solid earth being only six inches. My right foot and leg were almost powerless, and my right arm was broken in two places—above and below the elbow—and it was, as well as my right leg, twisted round the shaft in such a manner that the latter had to be turned in a reverse direction before I could be extricated. The threshing machine might have been stopped sooner had it not been that there was neither a sheaf of grain or bundle of straw to choke the cylinder; but, with admirable forethought, Mr. Gilbert, who was "feeding," threw in his wool hat, which almost stopped it. My head was bruised in a shocking manner; my forehead was devoid of feeling to the touch during the next three or four weeks. I was carried into the house, and soon afterwards drawn home in a sleigh. I was so much broken and bruised that my clothing could not be removed, and was put to bed in the clothing I had worn at the threshing, the barley beards, thistles and chaff they contained making it very uncomfortable. In this position I was compelled to lie for fifteen weeks. Dr. Sproule attended me. As my nerves began to regain their sensitiveness, the agony of my situation increased proportionately. There seemed to be ten thousand thistles in my clothing, each of them "right end up," but not "with care." I had read the figurative description of lying on a bed of thorns, but I never till then fully realized the full import of the parable. The day seemed to be never-ending, and the night without a dawn.

However, everything will have an end, and so did my illness. My leg, as I previously remarked, was power-

less. This was not so much to be wondered at: the sinews and muscles had been ruptured, so that to place them in their former positions would have been simply impossible; but my arm was twisted, in being set, at the break above the elbow; consequently there was a "hitch" at this place, which turned my hand half round, and rendered my arm comparatively useless. Dr. Sproule was the first person who raised me out of bed, and I was so weak that I had not been raised up on the bedside more than two minutes before I fainted. I was many times raised before I could bear the fatigue more than two or three minutes, so weak had I become.

I went to Toronto to see if anything could be done to put me in more possession of the use of my arm. Several eminent surgeons to whom I applied informed me that as I was aged, and having already undergone so much suffering, it was questionable whether I would be able to sustain this second shock to my nervous system. This, I believe, was correct, for I could not take a drink of cold water without producing a stinging pain between my eyes and in my forehead, so sensitive and weak had my nerves become. Dr. Aikins, of the Toronto Hospital, proposed to place me under the influence of chloroform, break my arm over again, set it right, and assured me he would "set me all right in nine days;" but I had suffered so much in the past, and although assured there would be no consciousness of pain on my part, I dreaded the ordeal of breaking newly-knit bones, and concluded to suffer the consequences of my misfortune. I afterwards applied to Dr. Edgar, of Yorkville, who rendered me considerable

benefit. He gave me some medicine to take inwardly, which renovated my nervous system, and prescribed the daily use of cold water poured upon my spine every morning. This I followed for some time, and felt a beneficial influence upon my right leg; but the cold weather was coming on, and not having a suitable room in which to use this application, it was discontinued.

After my first experience on being taken up out of bed, I had to be kept in bed fully a week before I could be raised a second time, but was occasionally raised with pillows; and when taken out of bed, had to be placed in a rocking-chair and drawn across the floor—this continued for two or three weeks—and then led by the arm: a true phase of second childhood.

From that time forward I continued to gain strength. I hired a man to assist in working my farm; but as I found this unprofitable, the cost overrunning the profit, I concluded to sell my farm and seek to earn my livelihood and provide for my family in some mode in which physical exertion would not be so much called into requisition as it was on the farm.

Accordingly I sold my farm, and opened a small store in the Village of Markdale, where I now reside; and although each day of my life reminds me *painfully* of my infirmities, yet my natural buoyancy of spirits keeps me consoled, and activity of mind prevents me, in a great measure, experiencing the loss of my limbs. Being in very moderate circumstances, a less sanguine temperament would have succumbed to the deprivation; but, with a firm faith in the truth of the moral which teaches

that "God helps those who help themselves," I have written this sketch of my life, in the hope that those who purchase it may be benefited by reading its contents, and that it may contribute to the publisher his due reward.

Before parting with the reader, I wish to say that I have not penned these lines as a masterpiece of composition—this has not been my aim—but I have exhibited my own life, with all its imperfections, as a guide to the reader in the path of his own journey through life. As I said in the former part of this work, I received little book or school education; but my mature judgment convinces me that book learning is only an *aid* to a true education. The multitude of my fellow-men think that education consists in loading a child's mind with a given number of words from a Walker's, Johnson's, or Webster's Dictionary, with a corresponding quantity of figures, to prepare for the routine of trade. Writing is but an instrument—a mere mechanical operation. But I hold that the true end of a sound education is the acquisition of the power of thought—power to gain happiness from, and contribute happiness to, all those with whom our presence comes in contact. Education should be so directed that it would enable us to draw correct premises from the past, and discover the source of a false judgment. This I hold to be an essential part of a good education. The mind was not created to receive passively a number of "set" lessons, to develop into that maturity which should shed lustre upon the human family in the sight of the Creator, but that which expands the mind

into a desire for the acquirement of Truth. Accordingly, a true education should inspire us with a profound love of truth, and teach us that *honour*, not *talents*, make the true gentleman. Let the thought, however, not be entertained for one moment that I depreciate book learning—it is that which exalts youth, conveys wisdom to the mature, and lends comfort to the aged. In the performance of its task it fears no dangers; it penetrates the bowels of the earth; explores sea and land; dives to the depths of the ocean; ascends to the sublime. No worlds too remote for its grasp; no heavens too exalted for its reach.

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